

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0031

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW- JANUARY 14

REF: PORT LOUIS 0013

SUMMARY: MINISTER OF EDUCATION BHUGALOO RESIGNED AFTER ONLY TWO WEEKS IN OFFICE. HE ALSO RESIGNED AS A DEPUTY, BUT ACCORDING TO THE PREVAILING SYSTEM HE WILL BE REPLACED BY KHER JAGATSINGH, LABOR PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL, WHO WAS THE LOSING HINDU LABOR CANDIDATE WHO MADE THE BEST SHOWING. FOUR DEFEATED CANDIDATES HAVE FILED APPEALS WITH THE SUPREME COURT DEMANDING RECOUNTS. THE OPPOSITION PRESS HAS BEEN ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO TURN OVER ADMINISTRATION OF THREE TOWNS TO PMSD APPOINTEES, ALLEGEDLY A PART OF THE DEAL UNDERLYING THE LABOR-PMSD COALITION. THREE SMALL PARTIES, THE MAURITIAN DEMOCARTIC UNION, THE MUSLIM COMMITTEE OF ACTION, AND THE MMM-SP, ALL DECLARED THEY WILL CARRY ON DESPITE THEIR FAILURE IN THE LAST ELECTIONS. RAM PYNDIAH HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM THE MMM, WHICH ANNOUNCED IT IS NO LONGER RESPONSIBLE FOR ANYTHING HE DOES OR SAYS. END SUMMARY

1. THE PRESS REPORTED ON JANUARY 14 THAT HERRALALL BHUGALOO
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HAD RESIGNED AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND AS A MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY AFTER ONLY TWO WEEKS IN OFFICE. BHUGALOO DECLINED TO MAKE A STATEMENT, BUT IT WAS SPECULATED THAT HE HAD EXPERIENCED SEVERE DIFFICULTIES IN HIS MINISTRY, ESPECIALLY WITH THE NEW SYSTEM OF FREE SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION JUST INSTITUTED. HE WAS NOT GIVEN FREEDOM OF ACTION TO CARRY OUT HIS IDEAS FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM, AND HE WAS REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY OVER THE

COALITION WITH THE PMSD. BHUGALOO IS A YOUNG HINDU POLITICIAN WHO AT AN EARLIER STAGE IN HIS CAREER WAS A LEADER OF THE MMM. IF HIS RESIGNATION STICKS, HE IS LIKELY TO BE REPLACED IN THE CABINET AND ASSEMBLY BY KHER JAGATSINGH, LABOR PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL, WHO WAS THE BEST LOSER OF THE HINDU LABOR CANDIDATES. A COMPLICATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT BHUGALOO'S ELECTION IS BEING CONTESTED IN THE SUPREME COURT BY SHEILA BAPPOO OF THE MMM, WHOM HE DEFEATED BY LESS THAN 50 VOTES. THE MMM IS SEEKING A COURT INJUNCTION TO PREVENT THE NAMING OF JAGATSINGH TO THE VACANCY CREATED BY BHUGALOO'S RESIGNATION.

2. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, ELIEZER FRANCOIS, HOUSING MINISTER AND SPOKESMAN FOR THE PMSD PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, SAID THAT HIS PARTY HAD FORMED THE COALITION WITH THE LABOR PARTY IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE "COMMUNISTS" (THE MMM) FROM TAKING POWER, ESTABLISHING A TOTALITARIAN REGIME, ABOLISHING ELECTIONS AND CALLING IN FOREIGN TROOPS. HE ADDED THAT THE COALITION WOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT THE ELECTORAL PROMISES OF BOTH MEMBER PARTIES. THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION, HE SAID, HAD REASSURED FRIENDLY FOREIGN POWERS AND INVESTORS WHO HAD LOST CONFIDENCE BECAUSE OF THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME. FRANCOIS ALSO DENOUNCED THE CAMPAIGN OF "DENIGRATION" AGAINST THE COALITION BY THE MMM PAPER, LE MILITANT. ACCORDING TO FRANCOIS, MMM LEADER BERENGER HAS NEVER BELIEVED IN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND CONSIDERS ELECTIONS A FARCE.

3. FOUR CANDIDATES (TWO LABOR, 1 MMM AND 1 PMSD) WHO WERE DEFEATED BY LESS THAN A HUNDRED VOTES HAVE FILED APPEALS WITH THE SUPREME COURT DEMANDING RECOUNTS. RAM PYNDIAH, DEFEATED

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MMM CANDIDATE (HE FINISHED SIXTH), HAS FILED A REQUEST TO HAVE THE ELECTION IN HIS DISTRICT CANCELLED FOR VARIOUS INFRACTIONS.

4. ONLY SEVEN OF THE 70 ASSEMBLY MEMBERS RECEIVED THE VOTES OF AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS IN THEIR DISTRICTS. WITH A CHANGE OF LESS THAN ONE THOUSAND VOTES, EITHER THEM MMM OR THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY COULD HAVE WON AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF THE ASSEMBLY SEATS, AND WITH LESS THAN 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER WALTER IS PROMOTING THE IDEA OF CHANGING THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN WAYS TO ELIMINATE SMALL PARTIES AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES (TO WHOM HE ATTRIBUTES HIS OWN DEFEAT). HE WOULD REQUIRE ALL CANDIDATES TO POST A DEPOSIT OF 5000 RUPEES (INSTEAD OF 250) AND PERMIT ONLY PARTIES WITH THREE YEARS OF EXISTENCE TO COMPETE. THIS WOULD HELP ELIMINATE SPLINTER GROUPS, HE BELIEVES.

6. THE GOVERNMENT IS MOVING TO IMPLEMENT ANOTHER OF THE LABOR

PARTY'S CAMPAIGN PROMISES: FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT DURING NON-RUSH HOURS FOR ALL OLD AGE PENSIONERS. THE PLAN IS EXPECTED TO BE LAUNCHED NEXT MONTH. IT WILL BENEFIT 56,000 AGED PERSONS, AT AN ESTIMATED COST TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SOME 1.4 MILLION RUPEES A MONTH.

7. THE OPPOSITION PRESS HAS STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED PLAN TO APPOINT PMSD PEOPLE TO HEAD THE MUNICIPALITIES OF PORT LOUIS, ROSE HILL AND CUREPIPE, AS PART OF THE DEAL WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE RULING COALITION. BY WEEK'S END NO CHANGES HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED IN THIS DOMAIN. THE PMSD USED TO RUN THESE TOWNS BUT RAMGOOLAM OUSTED THEM IN 1973 AFTER THEY BANKRUPTED THE MUNICIPALITIES.

8. THE MMM AND PMSD PARTY RALLIES SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 9 (REFTEL) WERE POSTPONED A WEEK BECAUSE OF THE HIGH WINDS AND HEAVY RAIN BRUGHT BY CYCLONE CLARENCE, WHICH PASSED CLOSE
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TO MAURITIUS.

9. GUY OLLIVRY IS RESIGNING AS LEADER OF THE MAURITIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION. HE SAYS HE OUGHT TO, AFTER THE PARTY'S POOR SHOWING IN THE ELECTIONS. THE PARTY IS NOT DISBANDING, HOWEVER.

10. YOUSOUF MOHAMED SAYS A GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MUSLIM COMMITTEE OF ACTION (CAM) WILL DETERMINE THE PARTY'S FUTURE. HE HAD NO EXPLANATION FOR THE FACT THAT SOME 80 PERCENT OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY VOTED FOR THE MMM IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS. NEITHER DID HIS FATHER, SIR ABDOOL RAZACK MOHAMED, WHO TOLD THE PRESS HE IS RETIRING FROM POLITICS. THE CAM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MET ON JANURAY 11 AND ANNOUNCED IT IS WAITING TO SEE WHAT THE LABOR PARTY WILL DO BEFORE DECIDING ITS OWN FUTURE. IT HAS DECIDED TO "CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE" DESPITE ITS FAILURE TO ELECT MORE THAN TWO DEPUTIES.

11. THE MMMSP PARTY BLAMES ITS POOR SHOWING IN THE ELECTIONS ON THE LACK OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG MAURITIANS, THE OPPOSITION TO CHANGE OF A LARGE FRACTION OF THE ELECTORATE, THE PREVALENCE OF COMMUNALISM AND CASTE-ISM, AND THE DOMINANCE OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY. THE PARTY PLANS TO "EDUCATE" THE POPULACE AND TO WORK ON GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZATION, FORMATION OF CELLS, ETC.

12. THE MMM HAS DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A HEADQUARTERS OFFICE IN PORT LOUIS AND IS REQUIRING CONTRIBUTIONS OF 1000 RUPEES A MONTH FROM EACH OF ITS ELECTED ASSEMBLY MEMBERS TO PAY THE PARTY'S EXPENSES. THE MMM CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED TO ENLARGE ITSELF ON A NATIONAL BASIS, AND ALSO PLANS TO CONTEST

THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS EXPECTED TO BE HELD LATER THIS YEAR.

13. THE MMM'S PAUL BERENGER TOLD THE PRESS NEW ELECTIONS ARE INEVITABLE, WITHIN A YEAR AT MOST. BERENGER IS PLANNING A TRIP TO ALGERIA, MADAGASCAR AND THE SYCHELLES TO
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MAKE CONTACT WITH "FRIENDLY" (TO THE MMM) GOVERNMENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES.

14. THE MMM'S LE MILITANT PUBLISHED A PARTY COMMUNIQUE JANUARY 11 INFORMING THE PUBLIC THAT PYNDIAH NO LONGER HAS ANY ASSOCIATION WITH THE MMM, WHICH CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANYTHING HE DOES OR SAYS. MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH TOLD THE PRESS THAT PYNDIAH, NEVER A MEMBER OF THE MMM, HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ADAPT HIMSELF TO THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PARTY AND IN SOME MEASURE HAD ETE#PARTY'S FAILURE TO WIN ENOUGH SEATS TO TAKE POWER. PYNDIAH HAS CLEARLY BECOME AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE PARTY. ASKED TO COMMENT, PYNDIAH TOLD THE PRESS HE COULDN'T BE EXPELLED FROM THE MMM AS HE HAD NEVER BELONGED TO IT. HE SAID JUGNAUTH'S FUNCTION IN THE MMM AS TO ATTRACT HINDU VOTERS TO THE PARTY. PYNDIAH IS SUING BERENGER FOR MONEY HE SAYS HE LOANED THE PARTY, AND HE CHALLENGED BERENGER TO APPEAR WITH HIM ON TV TO TRADE "REVELATIONS." TWTWTW.
KEELEY

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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